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Serial No. 10/646,890

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**IN THE CLAIMS:**

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1-15 in accordance with the following:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method for conducting a poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the polling method comprising:

a first ~~questioning by question step~~ of presenting a question to a first respondent;  
a ~~free reply step of~~ obtaining a free reply by accepting input by a first respondent of an unguided reply (~~"free reply"~~ hereinafter) to said question;  
a first ~~storing storage step~~ for storing the ~~a~~ free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;  
a second ~~question step~~ questioning of presenting said question to a second respondent after input of the free reply by the first respondent; and  
a ~~presentation step of~~ presenting to the second respondent the reply ~~option~~ stored in said first ~~storing storage step~~.

2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 1, further comprising:

~~an elective reply step of~~ obtaining an elective reply by accepting from a second respondent selection of a reply ~~option~~ presented in said presenting to the second respondent ~~presentation step~~ (~~"elective reply"~~ hereinafter);  
a second ~~storage~~ storing ~~step of~~ storing an elective input by the second respondent; and  
a ~~compilation step of~~ compiling by repeating said first ~~questioning question step~~, said obtaining the free reply step, said first ~~storage~~ storing ~~step~~, said second ~~questioning question step~~, said presenting presentation step, said obtaining an elective reply ~~step~~, and said second ~~storage step~~ storing, and collecting and compiling elective replies and free replies from said respondent group.

3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 1, further

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comprising a first ~~determination step of determining to determine whether or not~~ a free reply input by a first respondent and a predetermined reply option presented in said ~~presentation step~~ are substantially the same, wherein said ~~presentation step presenting~~ further presenting at least one predetermined reply option.

4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 3, wherein said first ~~storage~~storing step stores said free reply as a reply option to said question, ~~if upon~~ said first ~~determination step determining having determined~~ determines that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are not substantially the same.

5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 3, wherein: ~~upon~~if said first ~~determination step determining having determined~~ determines that said free reply input by said first respondent is substantially the same as said predetermined reply option, said ~~compilation step compiling~~ compiles said free reply as an elective reply made by selection of said predetermined reply option.

6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 3, further comprising a ~~confirmation step of confirming~~, ~~upon~~ if said first ~~determination step determining having determined~~determines that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are substantially the same, accepting from said first respondent confirmation as to whether ~~or not~~ the determination is correct; wherein said compiling is carried out if said determination is confirmed to be correct.

7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to any of claims 1, 2, 4, 5 or 6, further comprising a conditions-setting ~~step of~~by accepting settings on conditions for designating at least one or more first respondents; wherein:

In said first ~~question step questioning~~, said question is presented to one or more first respondents who have been extracted based on said conditions.

8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to any of claims 2, 4, 5, or 6, further comprising:

~~a second a second determining~~ determination step of increasing a count of reply options to said question when a free reply is stored in said first ~~storage step storing~~, and determining whether the count of reply has reached a predetermined maximum value;

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a third ~~storing storage~~ step of storing correlatively with said question options that said ~~presentation step presenting~~ has presented to second respondents; and

a re-surveying ~~step of~~, ~~upon if~~ said second ~~determining having determined~~ ~~determination~~ ~~step determines~~ that said reply options count has reached said maximum value, extracting based on data stored in said ~~third storage~~ third storing step second respondents who have made elective replies from options numbering a count that is a predetermined minimum value or less, and presenting said extracted second respondents with said question.

9. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to either claim 1 or claim 2, further comprising:

~~an iterating step of~~ by repeating said first ~~question step~~ questioning, said obtaining a free reply and said first ~~storage step~~ storing; and

controlling in which said iterating ~~step~~ is terminated, and said ~~presentation step~~ presenting and said second ~~question step~~ questioning are performed.

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling device for conducting poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the polling device comprising:

first question means for presenting a question to a first respondent;

free reply means for obtaining a free reply by accepting input by the first respondent of an unguided reply (~~"free reply" hereinafter~~) to said question;

first storage means for storing a free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

second question means for presenting said question to a second respondent after input of the free reply by the first respondent; and

presentation means for presenting to the second respondent the reply option stored by said first storage means.

11. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling computer product for conducting poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the computer product for causing a computer to function as:

first question means for presenting a question to a first respondent;

free reply means for obtaining a free reply by accepting input by the first respondent of an unguided reply (~~"free reply" hereinafter~~) to said question;

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first storage means for storing a free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

second question means for presenting said question to a second respondent after input of the free reply by the first respondent; and

presentation means for presenting to the second respondent the reply option stored by said first storage means.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable recording medium on which is recorded a polling program for conducting a poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the computer-readable recording medium on which is recorded a polling program for causing a computer to function as:

first question means for presenting a question to a first respondent;

free reply means for obtaining a free reply by accepting input by the first respondent of an unguided reply ("~~free reply~~" hereinafter) to said question;

first storage means for storing a free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

second question means for presenting said question to a second respondent after input of the free reply by the first respondent; and

presentation means for presenting to the second respondent the reply option stored by said first storage means.

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method comprising:

~~a question step of displaying a question;~~

~~a reply step of displaying at least one or more predetermined reply options to the displayed question, and accepting selection of any of the predetermined reply options, or input of an unguided reply as a free reply ("free reply" hereinafter), to the question;~~

~~a first determination step of determining whether a free reply is being entered;~~

~~a second determination step of determining, upon if a free reply is being entered, determining whether the free reply being entered and any of the predetermined reply options will be substantially the same before the input of the free reply has finished; and~~

~~a support step of supporting, upon if said second determination step has determining having determined that the free reply and a predetermined reply option will be substantially the same, supporting input of the free reply or selection of the predetermined reply option.~~

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14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 2, further comprising ~~a first determination step of a first~~ determining whether or not a free reply input by a first respondent and a predetermined reply option presented in said ~~presentation step presenting~~ presentation step presenting are substantially the same, wherein said ~~presentation step presenting~~ presentation step presenting further presenting at least one predetermined reply option.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 5, further comprising a ~~confirmation step confirming of~~ confirmation step confirming of, if said first ~~determination step determining~~ determination step determining determines that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are substantially the same, accepting from said first respondent confirmation as to whether ~~or not~~ the determination is correct; wherein  
said compiling is carried out if said determination is confirmed to be correct.